**“An Examine of Principles” American Sentinel 2, 12.**

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The columns of the AMERICAN SENTINEL have often contained quotations from the speeches and writings of National Reformers, which have thrown light upon the aims of the National Reform Association. Although none of the statements quoted, some of which are very damaging to the claim for innocence and piety which the Association makes, have been disavowed by the organs of that Association, it is possible that some may think that the persons giving utterance to them are not qualified to speak for the Association. Accordingly we have concluded to go to the fountain-head of authority, and set before our readers just what National Reform, so-called, is, as set forth in its own constitution. Following is the preamble:- {AMS December 1887, p. 89.1}

“Believing that Almighty God is the source of all power and authority in civil government, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of Nations, and that the revealed Will of God is of Supreme authority in civil affairs; {AMS December 1887, p. 89.2}

“Remembering that this country was settled by Christian men with Christian ends in view, and that they gave a distinctly Christian character to the institutions which they established; {AMS December 1887, p. 89.3}

“Perceiving the subtle and persevering attempts which are made to prohibit the reading of the Bible in our Public Schools, to overthrow our Sabbath laws, to corrupt the Family, to abolish the Oath, Prayer in our National and State Legislatures, Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving and other Christian features of our institutions, and so to divorce the American Government from all connection with the Christian religion; {AMS December 1887, p. 89.4}

“Viewing with grave apprehension the corruption of our politics, the legal sanction of the Liquor Traffic, and the disregard of moral and religious character in those who are exalted to high places in the nation; {AMS December 1887, p. 89.5}

“Believing that a written Constitution ought to contain explicit evidence of the Christian character and purpose of the nation which frames it, and perceiving that the silence of the Constitution of the United States in this respect is used as an argument against all that is Christian in the usage and administration of’ our Government; {AMS December 1887, p. 89.6}

“We, citizens of the United States, do associate ourselves,” etc. {AMS December 1887, p. 89.7}

The *object* of the Association is given in the second article of the Constitution as follows”- {AMS December 1887, p. 89.8}

“The object of this Society shall be to maintain existing Christian features in the American Government; to promote needed Reforms in the action of the Government; touching the Sabbath, the institution of the Family, the religious element in Education, the Oath, and Public Morality as affected by the Liquor Traffic and other kindred evils; and to secure such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will declare the Nation’s allegiance to Jesus Christ and its acceptance of the moral laws of the Christian religion, and so indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all the Christian laws, institutions, and usages of our Government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.” {AMS December 1887, p. 89.9}

This preamble and constitution stands in every issue of the Statesman, and is the document to which National Reformers point with pride as showing the justness of the work in which they are engaged. We propose to examine these articles in detail:- {AMS December 1887, p. 89.10}

1. The first statement, namely, “that Almighty God is the source of all power and authority in civil government,” may be true or false according as it is interpreted. If it be interpreted to mean that God has ordained that there be civil government among men, or that he himself exercises overruling power, or, as Daniel says, “removeth kings and setteth up kings,” we accept it as true. But if it be interpreted to mean that all civil authority. comes direct from God, and that he him-self directs and controls civil government, then it is manifestly untrue. Every nation on the earth has a civil government, but there is no nation on earth of which God is direct ruler, nor has there been any such nation since the children of Israel rejected God by choosing a king for themselves. It is a fact, as Paul says, that “the powers that be are ordained of God;” but it should be remembered that this does not mean that they are necessarily ordained as God’s deputies in the moral government of the world, but that it means simply that government in general is in accordance with God’s design. Proof of this is found in the fact that when Paul wrote these words, pagan Rome was mistress of the world, and the Emperor Nero, who represented that greatest of all earthly Governments, was the very embodiment of wickedness and cruelty. Yet even the Roman Empire governed by the infamous Nero, was better than anarchy. {AMS December 1887, p. 89.11}

If it were true that God is the civil governor of this world, then there would be only one form of government. But the statement that “the powers that be are ordained of God” is universally true. It is as true of the Government of England as of that of the United States, and of the Government of Germany and Russia as of that of either of the other countries. All civil authority comes from God; that is, neither emperors, kings, presidents, or councils would have any authority to execute penalty upon the evil-doer, if God had not ordained that civil government should exist among men. But the very statement that God “is the source of all power and authority in civil government,” even though given the broadest construction that National Reformers can put upon it, shows that the authority of the officers of the State is limited to civil affairs. The word “civil” is from the Latin *civis*, a citizen, and has reference solely to the relations *to one another*, of citizens of a State. Civil government is simply the guiding and regulating of the relations of men to one another, and has no reference to their special duties to God. It is charged with the duty of seeing that, so far as outward acts are concerned, men obey the injunction, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Beyond this it has no right nor power. {AMS December 1887, p. 89.12}

2. With the second statement, namely, that “the Lord Jesus Christ is the ruler of nations,” we take direct issue. We have no hesitation whatever in pronouncing this to be false, because it is contrary to the Scriptures. Out of the abundance of scriptural proof on this point, we shall at present refer to only the following:- {AMS December 1887, p. 90.1}

*(a)* Christ is now acting as priest and not as king. Hebrews 8:1. He is sitting at the right hand of God, but it is as “a priest upon his throne.” Zechariah 6:13. His work now is that of an intercessor (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24), and he has no other office. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.2}

*(b)* Christ himself likened his going to Heaven and returning again, to a nobleman that “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,” and who after a time “returned having received the kingdom.” Luke 19:11-15. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.3}

*(c)* God the Father is represented by the prophet David as saying to Christ, “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Psalm 110:1. And Peter (Acts 2:34-36) makes application of this to the present time, when Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. If he were now the ruler of nations, he would not expect anybody else to make his foes his footstool. They would either be his footstool already, or else he would reduce them by his own power. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.4}

It is true that Jesus said, just before he ascended to Heaven, “All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18); but the next statement, which follows this as a conclusion, shows that it was not civil power that was given to him. Let us read the entire passage: “All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:18-20. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.5}

Note the following points: 1. These words were spoken, not to civil rulers, but to private individuals whose sole office was that of “ambassadors for Christ,” to beg (not force) men to be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20. 2. The statement made by Christ, namely, that all power was given unto him in Heaven and in earth, was for the sole purpose of encouraging the apostles in their work of teaching the people the truths which Christ had taught them. Said he, “All power is given unto me,”-“Go ye *therefore*, and *teach*.” The power to which he referred was his power as “Mediator between God and men.” It is not all civil power, but all spiritual power. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.6}

Note also the following point: If our National Reform friends persist in the claim that all civil power was given to him, then they must admit that his ministers have also civil power, and that by virtue of their civil power they are to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is self-evident, for it is by virtue of the power that was given to Christ, that the apostles were commissioned to preach the gospel. We know that this claim has actually been made by prominent National Reform advocates. But such a claim is nothing less than a claim for the union of Church and State; indeed, it is a direct claim that the church and the State are one. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.7}

*(d)* Christ does not receive his kingdom until just before he returns to this earth, and he receives it not from men but from the Father. See Daniel 7:13, 14; 12:1. The first of these passages, with the context, unmistakably refers to the last great Judgment, and it is at the close of this that Christ appears before the Father to receive “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.” The latter text speaks of the standing up of Michael, who is Christ. Now the standing up of a king is an expression used in Scripture to indicate the taking of the reins of government. See Daniel 11:2. But the prophet says that when Michael shall stand up, that is, take his kingdom, there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time, and at that time every one of God’s people shall be delivered. This time is yet in the future. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.8}

*(e)* The Father himself says to the Son, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Psalm 2:8. And the next verse states that when he thus becomes the ruler of nations he shall “break them with a rod of iron,” and “dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” This dashing and breaking of the nations will constitute the time of trouble such as never was. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.9}

(*f*) In harmony with the texts quoted above, we read that under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, during which time the nations become angry, the dead are judged, the reward is given to the saints, and the wrath of God is manifested in the destruction of them which corrupt the earth, great voices are heard in Heaven saying, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and lie shall reign forever and ever.” Revelation 11:15-18. In Revelation 19:11-21 we have a prophetic description of the smiting of the nations and the ruling of them with a rod of iron, with the statement that then Christ bears the title, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” And Christ himself (Matthew 25:31-46) states that when the final separation between the righteous and the wicked shall take place, when the wicked shall be sent into everlasting punishment and the righteous shall be called to eternal life, it is when he shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, and that *then* “he will sit upon the throne of his glory.” {AMS December 1887, p. 90.10}

All these texts, which constitute but a small part of the argument, show most conclusively that Christ is not now ruler of nations until he receives the kingdom from his fore his Father just before his second coming, in power and great glory; that when he receives it he will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips, and will call the righteous to inherit his kingdom with him. Therefore, for any individual to say that Christ is now ruler of nations, is to deny the plainest declarations and of Scripture; and to make the claim, as many National Reformers have done and still do, that man can have any part in giving the kingdom to Christ, is nothing less than blasphemous presumption. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.11}

Next month we shall continue this examination of the National Reform Constitution. E. J. W. {AMS December 1887, p. 90.12}